



City of Lafayette Staff Report City Council



Meeting Date: April 14, 2025

Staff: Jonathan Katayanagi, Parks, Trails & Recreation Director

Subject: Lamorinda Village Supported Memberships

Background

In March 2023, the Lafayette City Council approved a budget allocation of \$60,000 per year for two years to support Lamorinda Village memberships for Lafayette residents who met a financial means test. This initiative was intended to provide essential services to seniors, expand volunteer opportunities, and improve access to community resources. However, initial implementation revealed participation barriers, including a reduced monthly fee requirement for members. In response, the Council amended the program in October 2023, eliminating financial obstacles and expanding eligibility to better support the senior population.

Since the program's inception, Lamorinda Village has received \$98,000 in City funding, covering membership fees for 143 senior residents. As of February 2025, approximately \$22,000 remains available through June 30, 2025. This funding has led to a significant increase in participation and has strengthened service availability for the senior community in Lafayette.

At their March 27, 2025, regular meeting, the Senior Services Commission discussed the Lamorinda Village Supported Membership program and unanimously voted to forward a recommendation that City Council approve continued funding of Supported Memberships to Lamorinda Village for Lafayette residents at \$70,000 annually for the next two years. Additionally, they recommend that funding should be provided upfront at the beginning of each service year and that the allocation be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding or a similar agreement requiring Lamorinda Village to automatically accept all residents of Chateau Lafayette and Belle Terre, as well as any Lafayette resident who meets the financial means test, as Supported Members. The agreement would also require the Village to make its best efforts to have a staff member participate in regular meetings of the Commission as the Village's liaison to the Commission.

Program Impact and Achievements

The collaboration between Lafayette Senior Services and Lamorinda Village has led to significant improvements. Membership in Lamorinda Village has grown from 271 members in 2023 to 434 in 2024. The expansion of programming has played a key role in this growth, introducing initiatives such as "Living Solo," the "Healthy Aging Lecture Series," and a new shopping shuttle service to Costco in partnership with Lamorinda Spirit Van. Wellness programs have also been enhanced, offering activities like Strength & Balance, Qi Gong, and a Music Salon. Village offerings now occur in local businesses, in community gathering spaces, virtually and at the Lafayette Community Center. Furthermore, the Senior SWELL Center was developed as a pop-up Senior Center at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

To support volunteer engagement, the Village has established an auxiliary program, which has helped increase the availability of volunteers to provide necessary services. This initiative has strengthened community involvement and enhanced the sustainability of service offerings.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

A primary challenge has been the inefficiency of Village and City staff spending significant time and resources on selling and processing free Supported Memberships, time which could otherwise be directed towards providing services. Currently, Supported Members submit an application to the City, which is then reviewed and forwarded to the Village. At that point, applicants must complete an additional membership application for the Village, creating unnecessary administrative burdens and barriers to participation.

Another challenge to note is that with the growth of the Village and the expansion of Supported Memberships, there has also been an increase in demand for assistance services such as transportation. The Village has proudly supported these members, but this requires additional coordination and resources.

Proposed Enhancements and Strategic Recommendations

Both Village and City staff suggest streamlining the process by granting funding to the Village upfront at the beginning of each service year. This approach would allow the Village to incorporate Supported Memberships into their standard member sign-up process. Additionally, by allocating the annual funding in advance, the Village could automatically accept all Chateau Lafayette residents, all Belle Terre residents, and any Lafayette resident meeting the financial means test as Supported Members without requiring an additional application. Eliminating the additional application requirement for Supported Memberships will reduce administrative burdens, streamline access to services, and increase participation. Providing the funding upfront will allow Lamorinda Village to fund the staff needed to provide volunteer coordination and support services for seniors.

Staff also recommend that the City require the Village to use its best efforts to have a staff member participate in regular meetings of the Senior Services Commission as the Villages liaison to the Commission. The liaison would be asked to report to the Commission at each meeting on the activities of the Village. This exchange of information would help strengthen the collaboration between the Commission and the Village. Also, the Village has been following the Commission's work on the Age-Friendly Action Plan, and the liaison can help coordinate the Village's efforts as a key stakeholder.

Conclusion

To improve efficiency and effectiveness and increase services to Lafayette's older adults, it is recommended that the City of Lafayette allocate annual funding of \$70,000 directly to Lamorinda Village at the beginning of each of the next two fiscal years. This recommendation maintains the current funding level of \$60,000 per year while making use of the remaining \$20,000 by distributing it over the two years. It should be noted that the funding for Supported Memberships was made available through a reduction in City staff, without a reduction in service. In fact, it has resulted in an increase in service based on Lamorinda Village's ability to leverage community organizations and volunteers to deliver services.

Given the demonstrated success of the Lamorinda Village partnership, it is recommended that the City Council approve the continued funding of \$70,000 annually for the next two years. Additionally, efforts should be made to streamline the application process, eliminate barriers, and improve coordination between the Village and the City. By providing the funding upfront, the Village will be able to focus on

delivering essential services rather than spending time on administrative processes. This approach will ensure that Lafayette's senior population continues to receive the support and services they need, fostering a more inclusive and age-friendly community.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that City Council approve continued funding of Supported Memberships to Lamorinda Village for Lafayette residents at \$70,000 annually for the next two fiscal years, with funding provided upfront at the beginning of each service year. Additionally, direct the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding or a similar agreement requiring Lamorinda Village to automatically accept all residents of Chateau Lafayette and Belle Terre, as well as any Lafayette resident who meets the financial means test, as Supported Members. The agreement will also require the Village to make its best efforts to have a staff member participate in regular meetings of the Senior Services Commission as the Village's liaison to the Commission.